grant sanctioned by the Central Government for improvement of the infrastructure of the Fora.

(ii) The vacant posts, wherever existing, of Presidents and Members of the State Commissions/District Fora to be filled up expenditiously.

(iii) Ensure constitution/re-constitution of the State Consumer Protection Councils and to hold regular meetings of the same in order to facilitate effective coordination between the State/UT and the Voluntary Consumer Organisation.

(c) No Sir.

(d) and (e) A proposal to set up consumer information centres at Thiruvananthapuram. Kochi and Kozhikkode in Kerala has been received. In this connection, the Standing Committee on Consumer Welfare Fund has taken a decision to provide financial assistance for one such centre in each State/UT, to begin with. Accordingly, the State Government of Kerala has been requested to submit their proposal for one centre in the proforma prescribed under the Consumer Welfare Fund Rules 1992. The district forum at Idukki and Wyand districts in Kerala have already been provided with financial assistance of Rupees ten lakhs each under the Central Sector One-Time-Grant Scheme. Additional financial for these district fora is not covered under the said Scheme.

Representation against stringent provisions of E.C. Act

1131. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any memorandum from the Federation of All India Foodgrains Dealers' Association regarding stringent provisions in Essential Commodities Act;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what action Government have taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The amendments proposed by Association inter-alia include, ignoring of minor and technical offences, giving of opportunity to the offender before initiation of criminal proceedings, non-inclusion of PDS dealers from the purview of the Act, allowances of 10% variation of stock to producers and 7% to dealers, making of all offences bailable, seizure of commodities to be limited only to that commodity in which there has been contravention, power of arrest given to an officer not below the rank of D.S.P. and second and subsequent offences to be considered within the same financial year.

(c) The suggestions of the Association have been considered by the Government. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 1999 is proposed to be introduced in the current Parliament Session.

Diversion of foodgrains from ration shops

1132. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a possibility of increasing leakages and diversion of foodgrains from ration shops, due to wide gap between the price of foodgrains for the below poverty line (BPL) and the above poverty line (APL) sections of population; and

(b) if so, what precautionary steps are proposed to be taken to prevent such diversions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) No, Sir. However, in an operation of the magnitude of PDS leakages here and there for various reasons including the gap between the